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Neglected Arabia





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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# Neglected Arabia



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# Missionary Letters and News from Arabia.

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April-June, 1902.

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## NEWS AND NOTES.

REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D.D.

The *Aden Gazette* reports that a heavy fall of snow took place at Sanaa in Yemen this winter. The cold was so intense that the thermometer fell two degrees below zero. The capital of Yemen is 7,648 feet above sea level.

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Rev. Dr. J. C. Young of the Keith-Falconer Mission was turned back by the Turks in his recent attempt to reach Sanaa from Hodeidah, but he reports an interesting tour in the regions north of Sheikh Othman as far as Misameer and Ed-Daregah.

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The first story of the Mason Memorial Hospital is nearly completed. The corner-stone was laid with appropriate exercises on March 19th. At that time the building was fairly under way and there has been no interruption.

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There is general political unrest in many parts of Arabia this year. The Turks are in trouble with the Sherifs of Mecca and the Bedouin population of Hejaz are opposing every step in the survey and construction of the new railroad from Damascus to Mecca. In Hadramaut there is trouble between two rival chiefs of Makalla and Shehr and one of them has imposed a heavy tariff against trade with Aden. In the Gulf the diplomatic struggles for supremacy between England, Russia, France and Germany continue.

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Kuweit has passed under British protection and now Sheikh Mobarek is planning a second attack on the Amir of Nejd. The

Bedouin use the opportunity of all these internal disturbances and outside rumors, to rob caravans and make travel unsafe even along ordinary routes. This week we hear how they overpowered a wealthy caravan bound for Hofhoof from Ojeir and butchered the Turkish guard to the last man.

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The failure of crops and scarcity of food in Persia has driven many to come and settle at Bahrein.

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Rev. F. J. Barny and Dr. Worrall have gone on an extended tour to Amara and Nasariya. An account of their experience will appear in the next number.

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On May 7th we had our first simoom at Bahrein this summer. The temperature rose to 107° F. and the air was filled with fine dust driven by a strong south-west wind.

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Rev. F. J. Barny has translated the form for the administration of the Lord's Supper from the liturgy of the Reformed Church into Arabic and the Mission will probably have it printed. Our inquirers at Bahrein are reading the Westminster Shorter Catechism from the Beyrout Press. Do any of our readers know whether the Heidelberg Catechism exists in an Arabic translation?

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Rev. J. T. Parfit of the C. M. S., Bagdad, writes of an inquirer who has found Christ as follows: "He is a shop-keeper in an historical city near Bagdad and became a very close friend to a mysterious old man who bore the same name as himself. This old man's philosophy led A—— to the conviction that the religion of Islam was unworthy of his confidence. It was not, however, till the recluse was on his death-bed that his pupil learned that his master was a believer in Christ and that some of the best things he had read to him were from Christian books which the old man would willingly explain but feared to lend. Our inquirer declares this philosopher died a Christian; ever since his death A—— has sought to know more of the Christian faith." For over twelve months this man has studied and read and prayed and even quietly tried to convince others of the truth in a town where there is no



missionary. Lately he came to Bahrein where there is more freedom than in Turkey. He has just gone back to his native town to get his sons and then return. While here he was bold to confess Christ in the face of opposition and annoyance on the part of Moslems in the bazaar.

Dr. Thoms reports four thousand eight hundred treatments given during the first four months of this year. This includes five hundred patients treated on his tour to the coast of Oman.

### *MEDICAL TOUR TO SHARKA.*

SHARON J. THOMS, M.D.

The most important event of this quarter has been our trip to the pirate coast of Oman. You know that Mr. Moerdyk spent a couple of months there last year and it was his purpose to go back for at least a short time this year and I also had hoped to make a medical tour to that coast at some time during the summer, but later on. The captain of a boat from Calcutta called at the Mission House and offered to take us as far as Abu Musa, where he was going for a cargo of red ochre. This is an island about forty miles off the coast of Oman and the arrangement would save a couple of hundred miles journey in native boat, so we immediately accepted his offer.

When we reached Abu Musa no boats were available for the remainder of the journey so there was nothing to do but to wait until one should come on its way from Persia, but we heard that there were gazelles (a beautiful species of antelope) on the island so I thought I would spend my time while waiting in hunting if I could borrow a gun. There was not a very good collection of the latter on board but I managed to borrow an old style Mauser that had been captured from the Chinese in the late trouble. One of the ship's officers had secured it as a curio. I went for gazelle but to those who might object to missionaries slaughtering harmless wild animals I should say that I did not hurt any of them although I saw a number of fine specimens.

We arrived at Sharka on Easter morning and ate our Easter dinner of rice and fish surrounded by slaves and slave dealers, some of whom may have taken part in the piracies of the old pirate days. These were not very pleasant surroundings for us on this sacred day far from loved ones but we were in our Master's service and we had no regrets.

The wickedness here is something terrible, verily another Sodom or Gomorrah. The conditions existing are simply unmentionable, and an Arab although no better than many others of them said that God was then punishing another certain town near by with fire and famine on account of their vile sins. Slave women and lewd men were about us all of the time. Even while we were inside our mat hut in the evening with the door closed they surrounded the hut and peered through the cracks at us. We pretended that we did not know that they were there, and Gabriel read long selections from the Bible in Arabic aloud, and then prayed long and earnestly aloud that these people might be led from the darkness in which they were wandering into the pure light of the Gospel which we had come to preach.

Monday morning dawned with crowds of sick people around our hut and it was with difficulty we kept them out until we could get our breakfast. Crowds continued to come until night and scripture portions sold like hot cakes. Women came with coppers which they pushed through the cracks and received their books in the same manner. Mr. Moerdyk and Gabriel also visited a neighboring village with books and went about among the houses of Sharka where many were sold. During the five days we were here we treated five hundred patients, performed a couple of operations and sold a hundred portions of scriptures.

We found a very interesting inquirer here with whom Mr. Moerdyk had many earnest religious discussions during his stay last year. He is an educated man and seems to be sincere but is very timid. We pray that he may yet bear open testimony before his people of a change of heart.

The three Arabs in the accompanying photograph are Sharka merchants and one of them was our host while there. I removed one of his eyes some weeks before this trip and replaced it by a glass one. Can you tell which is the host and which the glass eye?

The door to Oman is wide open to us now and as this is the

door through which we hope to reach Nejd, Central Arabia, we are praying that another doctor may be sent that one of us may make frequent visits to this coast and finally take the Bible into Nejd where I am sure a doctor would be quite welcome. What a



SHARKA MERCHANTS.

change might be wrought among these wild warlike Arab tribes who have never bowed to any power, except that of Sultan, should the leaven of the Gospel work amongst them! But until another doctor is sent they cannot be visited. I am afraid that I shall

not even be able to revisit Sharka as at this time the Dispensary at Bahrein was not closed without harm to the work and when we have a hospital it will be quite out of the question to leave even though these tours are so important.

We have been encouraged this quarter by several inquirers coming out quite openly as Christians and we have been surprised that there was not more persecution than there seems to be. Of course there is persecution, which at home would seem very severe, but their lives do not seem to be threatened although the most open one of them does not think it safe to drink coffee at the coffee shop for fear of being poisoned. These men say that many more are nearly convinced of the truth of the Gospel and are only Mohammedans in name. The harvest may be nearer than we think. Will you pray with us that many of these may become, not only almost but altogether persuaded, and that we may be ready for the harvest when it comes.

### *EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN OMAN.*

BY JAMES CANTINE.

The missionary in Oriental lands is often sensible of a feeling of regret and shame when he considers the remains of a former Christian civilization or dominion which arose, ran its course and fell before the attacks of the then more virile and aggressive faith of Islam. Here on the eastern Arabian coast Christianity had a very transient rule and left nothing behind but crumbling fortresses and defaced inscriptions. Just about four centuries ago the first Europeans appeared with their opportunity for making or marring the reputation of the cross and for proving or disapproving the vague criticisms and reproaches of that one source of authority in Arabia, the Koran. It is a matter of conjecture what might have been the course of another nation, but it is certain that the Portuguese, under their renowned captain D'Albuquerque, as with fire and sword they ravaged the coast, did nothing to commend the teaching of Him whose crucified form was doubtless ever before their eyes. For one hundred and fifty years a Christian government ruled supreme on the Oman coast, only to enrich the rulers at the expense of others, to shed blood unceasingly and to

build forts and castles whose guns were finally turned upon the flag they first owned and saluted.

Muscat was for a century a most important port of the Portuguese, and after they were driven from the island of Hormuz by the English in 1622, their strongest. Here with gradually weakening influence they held on until they were expelled the entire country by a national uprising of the Arabs in 1650. The Portuguese did not colonize in Arabia as they did in India, and their sole object seems to have been to control the routes of trade. This they did at Muscat by building two lofty and imposing cas-



PORTUGUESE CASTLE.

tles on opposite sides of the long and narrow harbor, commanding as well the town stretching along the beach between them. With a few repairs made from time to time these castles stand as they were built more than three centuries ago, and many old brass and iron guns still serve on occasion to throw uncertain shot against invading tribes.

But more interesting to us is a little room in the western fort which evidently was used as a chapel and still contains a font for holy water under an *Ave Maria* cut into the stone. In the town

the Portuguese built an immense building, now partially in ruins and used as the Sultan's stables, which served them as Governor's residence, warehouse, barracks, etc. It probably also contained a chapel, as it is called by the Arabs el Jereza, a corruption of Igrezia (church). On an old wall in another part of the town, doubtless belonging to one of the two churches mentioned by early writers, is a cross in relief, much defaced by the Arabs but still recognizable.

I have not met with any other signs of Christian occupation, and Arab stories confine themselves to chronicling their forays upon the unbelievers and their final expulsion. Although there were several Augustine friars located here from time to time, yet the few original documents at the disposal of the historian say nothing of any attempt to preach among the surrounding Mohammedan tribes. Perhaps later investigations in the archives of Madras and Lisbon may bring to light many interesting details of their century and a half of occupation.

The whole story is a sad and humiliating one for us, and the thought will arise—what assurance have we that this latter day contact between the Gospel and the Koran will be any more favorable to the former? One believes that among these early invaders were some devout men, priests and soldiers, who heartily labored for the glory of God, but the hope for a greater result from *our* lives is in our belief in the greater efficiency of the methods we employ. It is suggestive that while the form of the cross and the name of Mary have thus fruitlessly appealed to generation after generation yet the name of Christ was unrecorded on stone or paper. If the story of the cross, instead of the cross itself had been left behind—if Jesus instead of the mother of Jesus, had been thus openly worshipped, may we not believe that the God above would have been pleased to honor this attempt to bring him to the knowledge of the children of Arabia. Surely the thousands of copies of the scripture which we circulate, and the friendly intercourse which we constantly hold will prove more effectual to break down error and to win to Christ than the crumbling stone and rusting iron of the militant priests of Portugal.

*INCIDENTS IN DISPENSARY WORK.*

MARION WELLS THOMS, M. D.

There are no doubt many incidents in our daily work that would be of great interest to friends at home if we were always thoughtful enough to keep them in mind. Many things, however, that seemed strange to us at first, have now become so commonplace that we cease to think of them as of interest to others.

The customs of the people are filled with superstitions which are always cropping out but which they seem loth to explain if they themselves know the origin. At least one can't get a satisfactory answer as to why these things are believed. One morning a new patient said that her sister had sent for a small piece of one of my dresses. I asked what she wanted of it and she said her sister was not well and thought a piece of something I had worn would make a good charm. I told her I didn't treat people that way but if her sister would come I would give her medicine. She seemed quite disappointed to think I should refuse to grant such a simple request and evidently had little confidence in my judgment for she never came again.

An old woman not long ago asked me for a "morsel of rice" for her daughter who was not sick but suffering from sorrow. Her husband who had formerly been good to her had now divorced her and taken another wife. On finding, they had rice at home but for some superstitious reason wanted some from our kitchen I tried to comfort them with a Gospel passage instead of with the rice.

To us to whom our eyesight is so precious it seems strange that people for a day neglect sore eyes when it is possible to receive treatment, yet patients are constantly coming after their disease has become incurable. One woman whom I am now treating says that her eyes became very sore and painful and she asked to be taken to the doctor. Her people went to the imam—the man who leads in prayers at the mosque and is a sort of religious advisor—and asked if they should take her. He told them not to and probably gave her treatment on his own account either by reading some portion of the Koran over her or writing out a passage for her to use as a charm. Needless to say she didn't im-

prove and after a time was taken to a man from India who calls himself a doctor but has no recognized qualifications. He told her to go home and apply a native concoction which she did without any benefit. Finally, when one eye was hopelessly destroyed and the other nearly so, she came here and has been coming for weeks though nothing much is done for her except to keep the very small pupil dilated a little to let in more light. She seems grateful for the little benefit she receives and listens quite intelligently to our talks and Scripture reading.

One day a woman came from a town several miles away after all the other patients had gone. Dr. Thoms called me and I went down to see her, but when she found herself in the room alone with me she turned and fled. I followed her to the door and asked her why she ran away. She asked me where the woman doctor was. I told her I was she. She became very apologetic then and said she had never seen a foreign woman before and from my white dress and helmet she thought I must be a man. (The Arab men and boys wear white. The women always wear some color.) She was extremely friendly and called me "Miriam," having heard the doctor call me by name, all the time she talked with me.

A great many people here suffer from a disease of the eyelids called "trichiasis" which is commonly known at home as "wild hairs." We often perform a slight operation upon such patients to relieve the suffering which is sometimes intense. One afternoon while we were operating upon a woman a friend of hers who stood by and noticed that she did not flinch nor cry out as the doctor passed the stitches through the wound he had made in the lid, asked if it did not pain her. It must have hurt a good deal, but she only replied "My father was a soldier." The women are so often afraid and have to be coaxed to submit to any little thing that is unusual, it indeed they do not altogether refuse to have it done, that this manifestation of spirit and bravery was quite refreshing.



## NOTES.

H. R. L. WORRALL, M. D.

Even before leaving quarantine, Jan. 27th, I was approached by those needing medical and surgical aid. The same desire and request has not ceased to this date, May 8th, 1902.



CARRYING A PATIENT TO THE DOCTOR.

The work has been serious and frivolous. Serious that some patients have succumbed to their diseases as pneumonia, and frivolous that others have come to have an imaginary evil spirit exercised.

Perhaps the following will give an insight into part of our work. While treating patients one morning a porter came with a

large bundle on his back. Upon inquiring why he came to the dispensary and what he had, his answer was to open the parcel and, lo and behold, there was a patient—a woman.

AN INTERESTING WEEK began when the largest number in one day was recorded. The number was fifty-two, the date March 24th. On this same day Mr. Barny, Mrs. Barny, Freddie, Mrs. Worrall and myself were poled up to the grave of Rev. H. J. Weirsum.

The grave is in a plot of ground some five or more miles north of Busrah. The Englishmen here have raised a sum by subscription, bought the property, and after much difficulty obtained the Sultan's permission to have the plot used as a burial ground. There is a high wall of brick surrounding it and within are flowers and plants of various kinds, a keeper being hired to keep the place in order.

Tuesday although there was a goodly number (over forty) at the dispensary there came a little stranger who is now known as Esther Irene Barny. The welcoming ceremonies occupied considerable time of the whole household.

Wednesday also witnessed a large number at dispensary, but is notable for the first chloroform operation which we have had in the dispensary since our return from America. It was a case of cataract. One eye had been operated upon by a native doctor. The cataract had been pushed aside, out of way only and not extracted. The patient now came for the other eye, which had subsequently become blind. The operation was performed about three in afternoon and the cataract came out very nicely. The eye is now to-day, May 8th, in very good condition. To-day the patient came leading another blind friend, asking that this man also might receive his sight.

Friday there came to the dispensary a girl about 10 or 12, her cheek swollen very much, a discharge from her mouth very disagreeable. On examination of her teeth and gums the only tooth to be found on that side of face and lower jaw seemed to be loose. On applying the forceps I noticed that whole of lower jaw bone was loose. Bidding the child to apply hot poultices and bring her father the next morning she was sent off. The father came and upon explanation he told us to do as we saw fit. We applied the forceps. At first one-half of side of lower jaw bone

came away, next about one-third, and the third time the bone way into the joint. Bone was all dead. In three or four days after using a wash the flesh, or rather gum, grew over the cavity left by the jaw bone and was a beautiful pink, being healthy, and if all goes well will become very useful for mastication with teeth supplied by a dentist.

On Saturday came an unfortunate Jewess. While carrying a charcoal stove she had tripped going up stairs, her clothing had caught fire and she was severely burned. The Jewess had been treated by native doctors till she was afraid of all who made a motion to touch her. While picking up a piece of cotton she cried out in terror at the thought of being touched even by it. She refused an anaesthetic and so we were unable to do anything for her.

On April 27th Mr. Barny and I started on a tour to our out-stations. On arrival in Amara a telegram was waiting calling me back on account of an important case. While awaiting an opportunity to return to Busrah a case of fracture of "wrist joint" which is common enough in America, yet in the years we have been here we have only seen two cases. In this case a woman, fearing her child, just learning to walk, would stumble, ran, and while running tripped and fell upon her outstretched hands. Here also was again used the expression "I don't want medicines, doctor; only look at me." On Wednesday, April 30th, Mr. Barny left Amara for Kute-Hai, Nasariyeh and on April 31st I returned to Busrah.

Since my return we have recorded in one day sixty-two patients seen at end of dispensary hours.

The second cataract patient (upon whom we operated) came this morning to have medicine put in his eye. He said he could see better without the dark sun glasses which I ordered him to wear. He seems to see very well and can walk readily without any assistance, which he could not do before.

The weather has become so heated that the six or seven cataract cases waiting operation will probably be postponed till cooler weather comes.

Since arrival from America the record has passed 2,235 as number treated, a period of fourteen to fifteen weeks.

### *REINFORCEMENTS FOR ARABIA.*

At its last Annual Meeting the Arabian Mission appointed a committee to prepare a report on the subject of reinforcements and send it to the Trustees. The report has been received and is substantially as follows :

“In January, 1900, the Mission unanimously resolved ‘that in view of the present needs and promise of the work we appeal to the Board for the following reinforcements to be sent out immediately: Two single ladies for evangelistic work, a medical missionary for touring in Oman, and a specially qualified worker (lay, medical or clerical) for evangelistic work among the Bedouin tribes.’

“In January, 1901, after a year of fruitless expectation, the Mission reiterated this plea and at that time Mr. Wiersum was still with us. His death left a large gap, yet unfilled, and the more need for the very workers he plead for with us. We desire to lay before you the following unvarnished facts :

“1. The character of our field and its climate certainly indicate that on the bare plea of economy in money and men, each station should have some reserve force to meet emergencies. Yet Muscat has hitherto had only one man at a time to hold the fort. With only one missionary for all of Oman touring is hardly possible. The same is true in a measure at Bahrein and at Busrah since the doctors are tied down so largely to dispensary and hospital work. Nor must the Board forget that the vast distances between our stations, fortnightly mail service and quarantine regulations all unite to make it impracticable to go from station to station frequently without serious loss of time and much expense.

“In occupying these three strategic points in Eastern Arabia we have not followed our own devices but the leadings of Providence. Every year proves that the centers for influence were well chosen. We cannot and must not give up that which was purchased by so great a sacrifice. But unless we receive reinforcements either the work or the workers will break under the strain. This year the furlough of Mr. Cantine should and would have been asked for had there been a trained second-year man ready for Muscat. All of us would rather take the risk of a too long-delayed furlough than see work well begun abandoned.

"2. Regarding the extra medical missionary there is no need of argument. Unless the Board is ready to close medical work at Busrah, and so slap opportunity in the face, or is ready to shut up a new-built hospital at Bahrein when the doctor goes on furlough, they must send a physician to acquire the language and so be able to take over the work. In any case a hospital needs more than one doctor.

"3. Only a grave sense of responsibility would urge us again to plead for single lady missionaries, after the repeated resolutions of the Board to the contrary. We were all greatly surprised and grievously disappointed that the report sent to the Board last year in January and unanimously adopted by the Mission did not convince them of the need for and the practicability of such work. The opportunity has been demonstrated. The married ladies of the Mission have done what they could (some of them hazarding health in doing more than they should) to meet opportunies golden and direct calls of necessity for help. Hitherto and now we have not had any one who could devote all her time to work among women. Conditions in Arabia are less hard for single ladies than for those who are married. Socially and morally we who are on the ground can see no objection whatever to their work among Moslem women, and there is every prospect of blessing. We *know* we have lost golden opportunities in the past ten years by not having a staff of single lady missionaries such as is working in many other Moslem lands under similar conditions as face us in Arabia.

"4. In a letter dated October 8, 1901, the question was asked by the Finance Committee "whether a larger employment of native agents in the field might not obviate the necessity of further increase in the force from America"? The opinion of the Mission became evident during the last meeting when this matter was brought up. Although we fully appreciate the reasons for the inquiry the answer can only be negative at the present. In all pioneer effort leadership is important. Our helpers include men of spiritual power and capacity, but none of them are fit to inaugurate work or to carry on work without constant supervision. This is rather because of the character of our field and all mission work among Moslems than because of any serious lack in the men themselves. We love our native agents and would gladly increase

their numbers, but even this is only possible if we receive reinforcements from home.

"5. Finally, your missionaries on the field make bold to suggest to the Board that the only business policy for the Arabian Mission is reinforcement, and reinforcement immediately. We must hold what we have lest we lose our crown. The political affairs of the Gulf all point to greater opportunities in the near future and equal religious liberty for Eastern Arabia as is enjoyed in Egypt or India. Shall we be prepared to preach and gather in converts when the Persian Gulf has become an English lake and the railway from Kuweit opens all of Mesopotamia? Or will it be a lame mission with a weak staff of workers that represent Christ's Kingdom here? We believe that if the Board will select and appoint the men, that the money will be forthcoming for their support. A live man is more precious to the Church than the gold of Ophir, and she needs only to see and hear the man to make the exchange. Some of the men who are volunteering for Arabia are known to us personally, and we have every reason to believe that their support would be guaranteed within one month after their acceptance and appointment by the Board. We are making this matter of reinforcement an object of special prayer. It is not a small request nor a light-hearted appeal. We do not desire to conceal the fact that we appeal for *picked* men and women—the King's own."

The Trustees have already withdrawn all objections to the sending out of unmarried women, and the Woman's Board has generously assumed the cost of sending and supporting one and possibly more.

The Board is also seeking for men to answer this call. It should be understood, however, that neither men nor women can be sent out unless funds are specially contributed for this purpose and pledges made for their support. Aside from the fact that the Board has no means of borrowing money, it is a principle adopted in the beginning that it will not run into debt. To all who are interested in this Mission and desire to see the great opening in Arabia promptly embraced this call is urgently commended.

HENRY N. COBB, *Cor. Sec.*



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